

Biblical Assurance (Part 2)

by Paul Washer

A true Christian is characterized by sensitivity to sin, confession, and a desire for holiness, and God looks with favor on those who are humble and contrite of spirit.

Duration: 39:27

Scripture: Psalm 51:17, Isaiah 66:2, Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 3:7-8, 1 John 1:8-10, 1 John 2:4

Topics: "Assurance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the topic of being truly born again and how to know if one is a genuine believer. He emphasizes the importance of aligning one's lifestyle with God's will and the written word of God. The preacher warns against professing to be a Christian while living in contradiction to God's teachings, stating that such individuals are liars and even accuse God of being a liar. He highlights the incomparable love of God and encourages believers to have a sensitive heart towards sin and to seek salvation and a transformed life through Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Please open up your Bible again to 1 John chapter 1. This morning I made somewhat of announcement about the updating you on the work with our staff and I kind of regret for the sake of time I only wanted to make half of a report and then make a little bit of a report tonight and gradually keep everyone abreast of what's going on there and in the office and with the staff and I mentioned this morning about those who will be working primarily in pastoral care and youth care and counseling and everyone that I've got to know on the staff has just been a joy to me. We have spent a great deal of time, the time that I've been here, praying, studying the Word of God together. We're studying certain words.

First of all, love. Love. I mean if you don't have love, what do you have? Mercy, forgiveness, unity, joy.

And it has been such a privilege to share the Word, to pray and even cry. I'm so privileged to be working with the people that I'm working with and I mentioned Ryan and Matt this morning about working with me and I've just found such brothers in them. I got Ryan this morning, I was a little bit just antsy about coming here and preaching.

I said, Ryan, can we pray? He said, sure brother and just prayed. And then there's Jeff. I've just had such a joy talking to him about things and I really believe he's got a lot of vision, a lot of knowledge and that God's going to use him.

We have no idea what the future holds for this church and his role in taking care of all the techie stuff that none of us understand is so extremely important. And then, you know, this morning I mentioned that Matt and Ryan would be counseling and visiting and doing things with me. And Robert has done a lot of that and will continue to do some of it, but I don't want him to do a whole lot of it.

And here's the reason. He and I are praying together, studying the Word together. I hope to start studying, doing a study of worship together.

And there's so much talent there. And I'm so proud. I think that that there's going to be a just a tremendous, tremendous possibility here for worship, for biblical worship.

We've again, like I said, we have we've looked at the word of God together. We've prayed together. We've cried together.

And even though he's going to be doing some ministering, I want you to realize something. It's not just about ministering to God's people, and that's why I didn't mention him this morning. There is a real sense as a church, we need to be dedicated to ministering to the Lord.

And I want our music and our music director to be seen as primarily, you know, of course, minister to people, sure. But I want to see us with an attitude of when we come in here, we are about one thing, ministering unto the Lord in worship, pleasing the Lord in worship. And, you know, to do that, music minister has got to be in the word.

It's got to be praying, needs brothers around him praying for him, needs people around him in the word, you know, ironing, iron sharpening iron. And I just see some wonderful things coming out of this. And I want so much for God to be pleased with our worship.

And I am assured when I when I speak to Robert, when I speak to the choir and and the ensemble and all these people and we start talking about worship and to just see them just weep because of their desire. I am so happy. I think I'm just so privileged to be here.

And pray for the worship team. Pray for Robert. Pray that.

Well, you know. I'm so afraid when I get into this pulpit that I'm just not the man I ought to be. You know, it's a fearful thing to stand here.

I need to be godly and you need to pray for me. But look at me, I'm speaking to you. Now, that's a fearful thing, but Robert is speaking to God.

That's a terrifying thing. And so we want to grow and learn to be just as biblical in this church as we possibly can in the preaching of the word. Yes.

And also in the worship. I want you to throw out something that just does not exist. And, you know, I don't want to sound like somebody who knows it all, but I'm just not going to permit these two words to be spoken together.

And that's Christian entertainment. They don't go together. It's kind of like jumbo shrimp.

It just doesn't work. We're talking about ministry and worship. Worship a holy God in the beauty of holiness.

And we're going to need a lot of prayer to do that. We're going to need a lot of just a lot of time, but I want you to know that there's nothing but possibilities. And I'm so excited.

I can't sing. I can't play an instrument, but I love worship. I love to study about worship and I love to work with people in worship and and I found some fine people to work with.

So pray, pray, pray, pray. Now, we've been studying this morning, first, John, and about how can you know that you are truly born again? And the first test that we saw is that is that if you profess to know Jesus Christ as Lord, if you profess to be a Christian and your style of life contradicts what God has told us about himself and contradicts what God has revealed to be his will through the written word of God. Well, John says you lie when you say you're a believer, and I pray to God that it's caused some people to fear.

Some of you should have heard this message this morning and you should have said, praise God, that just gives me such assurance. Some of you should have heard that message and trembled. If you are professing one thing and living another, this is not this false doctrine of continuously carnal Christianity, there's no such thing.

A true Christian cannot remain in a continuous state or habitual state of carnality or sin, they cannot, because he who began a good work in them will finish it. So that's the first test. Now, after that first test, there's a very, very important test.

And the Holy Spirit is so wise here because that first test would lead some people and has led some people to wrongly believe that a Christian is without sin. And then when it says that a true Christian walks in the light, it's talking about sinless perfection. No, it's not.

It's talking about a style of life that although there is sin in the Christian life, it is not a habitual rebellion against God. And the proof of that is our next test. We are going to see that sin in our lives is not necessarily an indicator that we're lost, but our attitude towards the sin in our life will be an indicator of whether we know the Lord or not.

Look in verse eight. He says, if we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. His word is not in us. Now, you may be seated.

Let's take a look at this text. If we say here's something extremely important with John, he keeps coming back to this phrase, if we say, if we say, if we say it means absolutely nothing. You can say absolutely everything that you might want to say, but it doesn't necessarily validate your Christianity.

He says, if we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. Here's the test. A true Christian will be sensitive to the sin in their life and it will lead them to brokenness and genuine confession.

But the person who says they are a Christian and are not sensitive to sin, they are not sensitive to sin. It does not lead them to confession. The person who is that way is not a Christian.

Now, when I teach this, sometimes in a pastor's conference, I always say something I'm about to say something that all you pastors will almost laugh about because it's so true. Whenever there's a word from God out of the pulpit and the Holy Spirit begins to work, convicting the people of God of sin, sometimes that happens. You'll be preaching and it's like God begins to work and people begin to be convicted of sin.

You know what the most unusual thing is? It is always this pastors of many years will agree with me. It is always the case the most holy, the most godly, the most devoted people in the church are always the ones that are most broken over their sin and come forward confessing it. And the most devious, carnal, backslidden, cold hearted, professing Christians in the church sit there as cold as a stone, as though nothing has been said.

What are we seeing? We're seeing the difference between the lost membership and the saved membership. The true Christian does not live without sin. John makes that clear, but the true Christian is sensitive to sin and that sensitivity to sin leads them to confession, which leads them to cleansing.

Now, let me ask you a question. Are you sensitive to sin? Now, let me ask you another question that might terrify you. When was the last time you were broken over your sin and weeping? When was the last time God showed you specific sin in your life and it led you? To a broken heart.

Weeping and confession, I say that to so many church members and they don't even have a clue as to what I'm talking about. What is your attitude towards sin when it says in Ezekiel that he will take out your heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh? What he is saying is this, I will take out your heart of stone that cannot respond to divine stimuli and I will replace it with a heart that responds to me. Is your heart responsive to God when he begins to speak of your sin? Now, let's look at this text a little more in depth.

If we say that we have no sin, you know, in John, first, John 5:16, he talks about a sin unto death. And there is great debate has been will continue to be over exactly what that means. And I'm not saying that I know, but some very, very careful scholars have said this, it may be this, someone who adamantly.

Habitually refuses to acknowledge their sin before God. That when God comes to them, when God speaks to them, when God's dealing with people about sin, they dig in their heels and refuse to acknowledge their sin and their need of cleansing. Let me ask you a question, because the human side of this will always reveal something of the divine side.

How do you respond when someone comes to you and tells you that you have sinned? When some friend or some person you barely know comes to you with a word to convict you of something you've done wrong, do you buckle against that? Do you stand up and fight that? Do you immediately say no way you're judging you're this, you're that. Or do you ponder their words as if they could be true, do you think about it for a while, are you sensitive or are you hard hearted and proud? You say, well, if God wants to show me my sin, he can do it. Yes, he can.

Sometimes he uses individuals to do it. How will you respond to a messenger from God? Because that'll tell me a lot about how you will respond to God. Are you sensitive to sin? If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves.

Let me tell you something. You're deceiving yourself. You're not deceiving anyone else.

And you are most certainly not deceiving God. It is such a foolish thing to hide our sin. It's like trying to hide cancer from the only doctor who has a cure.

It's like Adam, isn't it? Adam, where are you hiding, of course? Hiding from the only one who can save you. Oh, my dear friend, I want to tell you pride, many of the patristics, many of the early church fathers on down through so many scholars, they have said that pride is the root of it all. Could be, could be, because the only reason we will not be sensitive about our sin or acknowledge it before God and even men is pride.

Pride. To break away from that demon we call pride is a very freeing thing. Oh, to confess our sins brings such joy, to acknowledge them before God can bring such freedom.

But the unbeliever will have nothing to do with that. The religious church member who is unconverted will have nothing to do with that. He will deceive himself and actually reach a point that we call self-righteousness.

You keep denying more and more of the truth of God as it applies to your life, and eventually you become cold as a stone and the most dangerous malady takes the place in your heart, the malady of self-righteousness. You become a religious man who knows not God, a religious man as cold as a stone, as hard as nails, as cruel as a tiger. He goes on and he says, if we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us to not acknowledge sin before God is to say that the truth is not in us.

Have you read John chapter eight, verse forty four? The same words are said about a certain person in that text. His name is the devil. There is nothing of truth in a person who will not acknowledge their sin before God.

Truth is as foreign to them as it is to the devil. If we, he says, say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, what does it say? He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Now, if we confess, first of all, we need to understand what the word confession means. So many people think that confession just simply means, Lord, forgive me. No, that's asking for forgiveness.

Confession, it means literally in the Greek language to speak the same thing. To speak the same thing, and what does that mean? The Holy Spirit, through the word of God, speaks to you and points out a specific sin. And basically, although we do not hear a voice, there is a voice.

There is an impression when the word of God is preached or it is read or the spirit is dealing with a heart. There is such a thing as a voice. And it says you have sinned.

You have anger in your heart. You have greed in your heart. You have jealousy in your heart.

You have bitterness in your heart. God speaks forth that word. To confess our sins is to say the same thing that God is saying to us.

Yes, Lord. Amen. So be it.

Truly, truly, what you say about me is true. I confess that to you, that's confession, that is confession. Now, I want us to I just want to read to you just carefully a passage.

Just listen, it's in Psalms 32, but just listen, verse three, when I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long for day and night, your hand was heavy upon me. My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. I acknowledge my sin to you and my iniquity.

I did not hide. I said I will confess my transgression to the Lord and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to you in the time when you may be found.

Now, listen, he says, now let everyone who is godly do this same thing. You see, godly people must deal with sin in their lives. One of the mark of godliness is that you are sensitive to sin and you're willing to honestly deal with it in your life.

Now, this passage that I've read, many people who profess faith in Jesus Christ, it is totally foreign to them. They live in sin habitually, continuously in rebellion, but their body does not groan under the weight of it. They don't even feel it.

They don't. They can't even see that anything is wrong. And why is that? Their heart has not been regenerated.

They are not truly children of God. You see, God doesn't have any special people in his kingdom because they're all special. He doesn't deal with one more than another.

In all of his children, he desires holiness and he'll see to it that it happens. For he who began a good work will finish it. And if you're a true believer and you sin, God will deal with you.

Hebrews chapter 12 is very, very clear that if a person can live in sin without discipline, they're an illegitimate child. They do not belong to God. Now, when it speaks about confession here, we need to be very, very careful.

And I think Dr. MacArthur points this out quite well. No man knows all his sin. No one.

You know, I was in the office before coming out to greet all the people and I'm walking back and forth, Lord, show me, show me, show me. You know, but but even walking out there saying, OK, I dealt with a few things in my life, but walking out that door, I wasn't a man saying, OK, I have confessed everything I've ever done. I don't have a clue about everything I've ever done.

So when it talks about confession, it's not something that can almost drive you internally insane, thinking about, do I have all this done? But it is more a state or an attitude. Now, I want to read to you and I always like to go ahead and turn to it myself instead of just quoting it. And there's a reason so that you see that it's actually in the Bible.

It's Isaiah 66, verse two, he says, for my hands made all these things, thus all these things came into being, declares the Lord. He's saying I don't need anything from anyone. God's not served by human hands, but to this one, I will look to him who is humble and contrite of spirit and who trembles at my word.

This gives me more hope for the Christian life than almost any other verse in the Bible, with exception of those that talk specifically about the finished work of Christ. And why is that? I'll tell you why. If it said here that God would look to me with favor and compassion because I perfectly obeyed his law, there would be no hope for me.

Or if he said that he looked to me because my heart was always right and he looked to me because my heart was always passionately on fire for him, there would be no hope for me. But this is what he says. I will look to the one and that means look with favor.

I will look to the one who is humble and contrite of spirit and who trembles at my word. What are you to do in light of the word? So many people are always talking about with regard to the word, we need to obey it. And that is true.

But more, the first step is tremble before it. You see, when you've got this Bible open and God begins to point out sin in your life, the first thing is don't be discouraged. This is not an executioner or prosecutor.

Pointing out your sin in order to use it to condemn you. This is the one who is for you and he's pointing out your sin because he loves you and he wants to see you healed. He wants joy in you.

You say, oh, there you go with the emotion again. Have you not read? The fruit of the spirit is love, joy. C.S. Lewis said one time, I think joy may be the primary evidence that one has truly come to know the Lord.

After years of driving myself in the ground, trying to earn the love of God and be holy enough to be loved, it almost led me to a nervous breakdown. And one day the love of God was shed abroad in my heart like something like a thunder from heaven. And I'm happy not because of my performance, but because of his finished work on my behalf.

And when he points out sin, he points out sin as someone who loves me and is for me and will not allow me to be condemned on that day. He will stand up and raise a standard against every flood of Satan that tries to drag me down into the pit of despair. Satan will stand up there and accuse and accuse and accuse.

And then God comes like a king riding a mighty mount with a mighty standard. It sets me free. So when we talk about sin, believers, always believers, so many believers, when I preach this, I come down from the pulpit and they say, oh, you really stepped on my toes.

And I said, well, then I did a terrible job because that was not my intention. It's to show you that there is a lover of your soul who loves you more than you could ever imagine. You can't know God's love because you've never seen anything like that before.

There's no example. You look to mothers, fathers, grandparents, wherever you want to look, a soldier dying for his men on the field. You know nothing of the love of God because nothing compares.

And that's why you have so much trouble. Your problem is not in believing God to do a miracle or to raise the dead. Your problem is his love is so great you can hardly believe it to be true.

So when I talk about God wanting to expose your sin, it is not to kill you. It's to save you and set you free. A true believer will recognize that.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous. Now, the fact that we sin show that we are neither faithful or righteous. And I think maybe that's why John used these words.

He's trying to tell you something. Do you know why you have hope, believer? Because God's not like you and he's not like me. And he's not like those who would judge you or destroy you or cast you out.

You see, where men are neither faithful nor righteous, he is both. He is faithful to fulfill all his promises concerning you because he is righteous. He always does that which is right.

That which is conformed to his nature. You can trust him. Now, look at this, he says he is faithful and he is righteous to forgive us our sins.

But not only to forgive, you need something much more than forgiveness. You move in the realm of forgiveness almost as just positionally and almost legally. You need to understand something.

There's more offered here than forgiveness of sin. There is cleansing sin. And not just before him, the cleansing of your conscience.

How can I how can I describe this to you? Let's say a man of God, true man of God, one that this happens. A man of God commits a heinous sin. Oh, if you if you've walked with God and you have known his presence and then to commit a heinous crime before him, I have been told that a man of God will come close to losing his mind, take his own life, suicide.

How could he ever how could he walk with God for so many years and then fall in such a tragic way? How can there ever be any hope? I'll tell you how, because Jesus not only forgives sin, he cleansed the conscience of guilt. He can remove that from your mind, he can remove that from your heart. He is a balm.

There is a balm in Gilead. There is a healing lotion. That is why I tell you, if you're a believer, it doesn't matter what you've done or what you've become.

He can not only forgive you, but he can cleanse you from all unrighteousness. There is not one unrighteous thing you can do that he cannot cleanse you of and set you free and restore your heart. He can do that.

Have a man of God, not a man of God in this pulpit that preached against sin. You think just preaching against sin, preaching against it. Do you know why? Because for the believer, when he understands that he has sinned, when he's heard it, when he's heard it, he's heard it.

He can be set free, but you've got to preach against it first. You've got to warn God's people, not so that they're crushed in the spirit, but so they can be set free. And that's what he's saying here.

We have a Savior who is faithful and righteous and will forgive us of all our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now, what is unrighteousness? Everything that does not conform to the perfect character and will of God. That's what sin is, lack of conformity to the character and law of God.

Everything that we have ever done that does not conform to his perfect, holy character, he can cleanse us of it. That's how how can I stand before you? The terrible sinner that I was prior to my conversion, the stumbling saint that I've been all my life, how can I stand before you? I'll tell you how this is true. That's how this is true.

Now, we're just going to go through this test and we're in the last verse. And I want you to look. Verse 10, if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar.

That's very important. A person who is in sensitive sin, who will not acknowledge their sin. Now, look, they're not just saying that God's lying about their sin.

They're saying something much more horrible. They're saying God is a liar. There's one thing to say to a man, you just lied.

There's another thing to say, you are a liar by nature, by character. You're a liar. And what does Scripture say? No, he is faithful and righteous.

The very opposite of a lie. Oh, we should not harden our hearts when the Holy Spirit comes, when the word of God is preached. We should not harden our hearts.

No, no. A thousand times. No, do not harden your heart.

Do not do that. Just open your life. Open your heart.

Lord, here I am. Show me. Confess your sin before the Lord and he will be faithful.

Now, I want to just talk to you for a moment about the psychology of all of this. And I'm not going to go to a psychology book. I'm going to go to Isaiah.

Isaiah comes before the Lord. A majestic scene in the year the King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord high and lifted up in his train, filled the temple above him, stood the seraph and each one having six wings with two. They covered their face with two.

They covered their feet with two. They did fly and one cried unto the other. What a terrifying picture.

Isaiah says, I'm undone. He pronounces a curse upon himself. Let me die.

I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips. Now, look at God's reaction. Look at what God did not do.

God did not look at Isaiah and say, oh, Isaiah, you're just taking this too hard. I didn't mean I didn't mean that. Now, it's OK.

Now, just think about that for a moment, some now listen to me, saints, I'm not kidding around right now, this is truth. Some believer comes to you because they've sinned against you and they say, I have sinned against you. Forgive me.

And what do you say? Oh, that's all right. Don't worry about it. That's wrong, that is as wrong as it can be.

I will not allow you to do that to me. I must have your forgiveness. I must hear it.

If the Holy Spirit has shown me my sin and I come to you asking forgiveness, do not call God a liar. Do not say, oh, that really wasn't sin or that's all right or that's OK. No, I need your pardon and I need to hear it for the Paul.

Yes, you have sinned and I forgive you. And it's over. So notice what God did not do.

He did not just say, OK, Isaiah, that's OK, just let it slide. At the same time, he did not crush Isaiah. He did not say, Isaiah, it's over.

It's finished. I mean, I've let you be a priest, I've given you so many privileges, you've done this, it's over, get out of my presence. He didn't do that either.

What did he do? He called an angel, get a coal. We're going to cleanse this man. When you go before God, say, oh, God, I have sinned.

He is faithful and righteous, not just to let it pass by. He's faithful and righteous, he will not crush you, he will forgive you and cleanse you from all your sin. Now, look again, if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us again.

The person who hardens their heart, the person who is insensitive to sin, shows not only that they are not a child of God. But that they're a child of the devil, because the very words that is spoken about Satan, the truth is not in him, is spoken about this person. The truth is not in them, the word is not in them, the gospel is not in them, it's foreign to them.

There's two other things that I want to say, number one, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins. Now, it says here quite clearly in verse 10, if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar. But now to say someone is a liar is to doubt their character.

If God tells you that you have sinned and you say no, you are casting doubts about his character. Now, many of those of you who are saints do not do that, but I want to show you something that many of us as Christians do. When God says, I am faithful and righteous to forgive you your sins, we do not believe him.

We confess sin and then we live in sort of a spiritual limbo for days, thinking that we've kind of got to allow this to kind of run its course before we can actually come back into the presence of God. before we can call on His name. There are so many people that I know, Christians that are truly Christians, but like Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress, they're in the sloth of despondency, they're in despair, they doubt God's forgiveness, they doubt God's ability to cleanse, they doubt God's Word when He says, I have forgiven you.

Christian, the greatest demonstration of faith is to believe God. To believe God when He tells you that He loves you, and to believe God when He tells you, you are forgiven. And it is over.

You've got to believe that. You've got to believe it. Oh, it's such a wonderful, freeing thing.

Finally, the second thing in close. Saints, I am terrified. Absolutely terrified.

I'm an itinerant preacher. I'm an itinerant preacher. I travel around.

You see a lot of things. I have to come to the conclusion, a conclusion that many leaders and theologians have drawn. I've heard some say that if we take the Bible seriously, less than 10-15% of all evangelicals, even in Bible-believing churches, are born again.

And one of the things that makes me think that that is true is just the absolute, mind-boggling insensitivity to sin. Can you go home tonight after worshiping the Lord here? After hearing about missions? After hearing a sermon like this? Can you go home and just turn on an ungodly program that just totally contradicts everything God has ever said about Himself and His will? Can you do that and watch it freely? Can you go to work tomorrow and just blend right in with all the ungodly around you? Can you walk the way they walk? Can you talk the way they talk? And even though a lot of people don't like to hear this anymore, they think it's old-fashioned, can you dress the way they dress? Can you do that? Oh, my dear friend, are you not sensitive to sin? You're sitting there tonight and you're going, man, from what He has said, I am very insensitive to sin. And you need to talk to someone.

And again, I'll be available here tonight. We need to deal with these things. We need to deal with them.

Now, I've given the invitation and I want you to think about it. I want you to think about it. And I want you to act on it.

Are you saved? Do you know Him? Does He know you? Is it evident in the fact that your style of life reflects His character and His will and your style of life demonstrates a real sensitivity to sin? Does it? Because if not, please, after this service, after this prayer, come and talk to me or one of the pastors. Oh, don't walk out this door and have the Word of God stolen from your heart. Don't do it.

Let's pray. Father, I come before You. And oh dear God, I pray that You would work in the heart of Your people, that You would open up the heart of men and women with the sensitivity to sin.

And Lord, if You have revealed to someone tonight that although they profess Christ, they do not know Him and they are not known by Him, oh Lord, that they would respond. And help us, Lord, those who are here as ministers, as pastors, help us to move and to speak with wisdom. It is in the name of Christ.

Amen.

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